

Enlargement to the Balkans, crucial for Europe's security



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Despite the renewed momentum behind the European Union's enlargement policy since 2022, the structural problems¹ inherent in the accession process remain largely unresolved and prevent it from becoming a truly geopolitical instrument. At the same time, the security environment in the Western Balkans has become increasingly unstable. Russia's war in Ukraine and its hybrid wave, the transatlantic divide and political uncertainty emanating from the United States have all contributed to making this environment more unpredictable.

In this context, beyond the urgent need to end the conflict in Ukraine, the European Union must also strengthen stabilisation efforts in the Western Balkans. In its current form, the enlargement policy is not sufficient to meet the new challenges arising from geopolitical trends, which have a considerable impact on European security. While the prospect of EU membership is supposed to serve as a lever to stabilise a region, it is no longer

sufficient on its own to achieve this objective. The Union should therefore combine its current security and defence efforts with **a strengthening of strategic partnerships with candidate countries to prepare them for closer integration into the EU's security and defence ecosystem.** At the same time, it can adapt its pre-accession approach so that it already contributes to developing regional security and defence capabilities. This approach would demonstrate, if proof were needed, that EU enlargement and deepening are not competing objectives.

By strengthening security and defence cooperation, supporting the modernisation of defence industries in the region and investing in strategic infrastructure, **the EU can better align its enlargement policy with its fundamental strategic interest of stabilising its neighbourhood.** This becomes even more urgent in the context of reduced or competing US engagement.

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¹ Dabrowski, M. (4 November 2025). *Momentum for EU enlargement risks falling victim to the veto.* Bruegel. <https://www.bruegel.org/first-glance/eu-enlargement-momentum-risks-falling-victim-veto-power>

I • Security: a renewed stabilisation strategy for a fragile security environment

Since 2022, the Western Balkans has once again become a vulnerable region in the European security landscape. While large-scale military conflict is unlikely in the short term, it is essential to better understand regional security dynamics in order to prevent further erosion of the fragile peace agreements in the region and the risk of future escalation. External and internal pressures continue to fuel instability and delay the region's European integration. **While Russia is unlikely to seek open confrontation with the West in the Balkans, it continues to engage in disruptive influence operations²** aimed at hindering full stabilisation and slowing integration into Western political and security structures. China has elevated its relations with Serbia to the level of a strategic partnership³, combining political, military, technological and economic cooperation.

Other external actors play a more pragmatic role. Turkey has continued to deepen its relations with the Balkans and remains a trusted partner and an important regional player. It has continued to deepen its relations with the Balkans⁴. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are also present with foreign direct investment in sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture, real estate and tourism, particularly in Albania, Montenegro and Serbia⁵. While not all foreign interventions are inherently destabilising, **the accumulation and**

overlap of the political agendas of these external actors can thwart Europe's goal of stabilisation.

Beyond these dynamics, however, the most significant pressure on the regional security environment today comes from the growing rift in transatlantic relations and the unpredictability of US foreign policy. The security architecture that ended the conflicts of the 1990s and ensured three decades of relative stability was the result of shared values and a strong transatlantic partnership. This structure is now under increasing strain and risks weakening, especially as Washington adopts a more transactional approach to European security issues.

These external pressures are compounded by growing internal fragility. Institutional and political crises have intensified across the region, fuelled by endemic corruption and the rise of illiberal leaders. In Serbia, student protests⁶ have shaken President Vucic's government, which has responded with repression and violence, pushing the country further away from its European trajectory. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, secessionist rhetoric⁷ has translated into concrete political and legal actions that threaten the country's integrity. In Kosovo, tensions in 2023⁸ over governance in northern municipalities expose the country's vulnerabilities related to its unresolved status of sovereignty and incomplete recognition.

- 2 Tafuro Ambrosetti, E. (20 November 2025). *Russia's pervasive influence in the Western Balkans*. ISPI. <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/russias-pervasive-influence-in-the-western-balkans-223261>
- 3 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. (n.d.). *China*. <https://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/foreign-policy/bilateral-cooperation/china>
- 4 Latic, N. (23 January 2026). *Why Turkey is becoming the most useful partner in the Western Balkans*. Türkiye Today. <https://www.turkiyetoday.com/opinion/why-turkiye-is-becoming-western-balkans-most-useful-partner-3213436?s=3>
- 5 Gjoni, I., Ćukić, I., Cela, A., & Trajçe, A. (December 2025). *Rules or agreements? The EU's challenge in regulating corrosive capital in the Western Balkans*. Carnegie Europe. <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/research/2025/12/rules-or-deals-the-eus-challenge-in-regulating-corrosive-capital-in-the-western-balkans>
- 6 European Parliament. (16 October 2025). *Serbia: Polarisation and increased repression*. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/agenda/plenary-news/2025-10-20/15/serbia-polarisation-and-increased-repression>
- 7 Ćerimagić, A. (25 March 2025). *A dangerous stalemate: the battle for Bosnia's institutions*. Royal United Services Institute. <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/dangerous-standoff-battle-bosnias-institutions>
- 8 Richet, E. (31 May 2023). *Serbia-Kosovo: "This is the most serious situation since 1999"*. L'Express. <https://www.lexpress.fr/monde/europe/serbie-kosovo-cest-la-situation-la-plus-grave-depuis-1999-WYCXHXBZCF-FDLF3XXKEUZ7SPVU/>

The EU is struggling to ease these tensions. This reflects both its difficulty in maintaining enlargement as a credible incentive to resolve them and the enduring impact of problems inherent in status and governance arrangements, particularly in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Kosovo is the only country in the region that has not yet begun the formal accession process, due to non-recognition by five EU Member States⁹. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, progress has been hampered by the legacy of the Dayton institutional framework, persistent internal divisions and recurring political crises, to which the EU has been unable to find an effective response. Over time, as confidence in the accession process and EU mediation eroded, local political leaders increasingly pursued agendas that reignited tensions, creating additional challenges to the stabilisation of the region.

In order to avoid escalation, the EU-27 must review their conflict resolution mechanisms and intensify their diplomatic engagement to resolve outstanding issues relating to sovereignty and good neighbourly relations. In the context of tense relations with the United States, the EU should deepen its cooperation with other partners, such as the United Kingdom, Canada and Turkey, which have their own incentive and coercive tools, to support the goal of stabilisation in the region. At the same time, the Union should continue to **make enlargement a real lever for this stabilisation, accelerating the gradual economic and political integration of the region** and ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated in the next long-term budget to support this process. Finally, **the EU should gradually integrate the Western Balkans into its security and defence ini-**

tiatives, in line with its broader objective of achieving strategic autonomy, securing its borders and stabilising the entire continent.

II • Defence: reliable partners in a strategic region

The changing global security environment is increasing pressure on small and medium-sized states, particularly those that have traditionally relied on the United States as the ultimate guarantor of their security. This is particularly evident in the Balkans, and even more so among partners that remain outside NATO¹⁰, such as Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In response to this situation and in line with European priorities, most governments have increased their defence budgets and committed to meeting or exceeding the 2% of GDP target¹¹. There is growing recognition that long-term security cannot rely solely on external guarantees, which explains these countries' interest in moving from being 'consumers' of security to contributors to European security, in particular through the development of industrial defence capabilities.

This ambition is reinforced by **a high degree of political and strategic alignment with the EU**. With the notable exception of Serbia, the Western Balkan countries are fully aligned with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). They have established themselves as reliable contributors to NATO missions and the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)¹². Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, their support for Kyiv has gone well beyond political condemnation of Moscow. They have provided military assistance¹³, including

⁹ Chypre, Grèce, Roumanie, Slovaquie et Espagne

¹⁰ La Serbie maintient une politique de neutralité militaire, ne cherche pas à adhérer à l'OTAN, mais coopère avec cette organisation dans le cadre du Partenariat pour la paix. Elle cherche à diversifier sa coopération en matière de défense et à équilibrer ses relations avec ses partenaires occidentaux mais aussi avec la Russie, la Chine et d'autres acteurs.

¹¹ Krstinovska, A., & Marrone, A. (2025). *Europe's neglected allies: why the Western Balkans are important for EU defence preparedness* (thematic report no. 2). ELIAMEP & think nea – New Narratives of EU Integration. https://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/think-nea-defence-report-FINAL_compressed.pdf

¹² European External Action Service. (6 February 2025). *Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) / Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in the Western Balkans*. European Union External Action. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/common-foreign-and-security-policy-cfsp-common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp-western-balkans_en

¹³ Memišević, O. (15 March 2024). *Behind the political lines: Western Balkan military support for Ukraine*. Strategic Analysis Think Tank. <https://www.strategicanalysis.sk/behind-the-political-frontlines-western-balkans-military-support-for-ukraine/>

ammunition, vehicles and small arms, hosted or contributed to training activities, and provided logistical support. Reflecting this cooperation, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy publicly expressed interest in 2024 in establishing a joint arms production plant with Western Balkan partners during a visit to Tirana¹⁴.

Geography further enhances the strategic value of this partnership. The region is surrounded by EU Member States. It lies at the crossroads of major transport routes connecting the Adriatic to the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea region.

In terms of military industry and procurement, the situation varies considerably. **Serbia remains the industrial heavyweight in the region**, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina¹⁵. Both countries produce a full range of ammunition and artillery. They have technical expertise in both Soviet-calibre and NATO-standard production¹⁶. Belgrade purchases large quantities of military equipment from China, including air defence systems

and drones. Between 2020 and 2024, 57% of Serbian arms imports came from China, 20% from Russia and 7% from France¹⁷. Since 2022, Serbia has been seeking to further diversify its purchases, notably through a major contract with the Israeli company Elbit Systems¹⁸ and smaller acquisitions from European suppliers¹⁹. Bosnia and Herzegovina has a dynamic ammunition industry, whose exports have doubled in recent years²⁰. The country purchased Bayraktar drones from Turkey in 2024²¹ and Italian Leonardo helicopters from the United States in 2025, in line with its military modernisation objectives²². Albania is seeking to revitalise²³ its defence industry and attract NATO-aligned investors. Italy remains its strategic partner, with expanded cooperation²⁴ in the areas of training, interoperability, maritime security and operational readiness. In 2025, it also signed²⁵ agreements with the United Kingdom and Turkey²⁶, to strengthen cooperation in advanced military systems and counter-drone capabilities, as well as to increase the operational capabilities of its armed forces. Montenegro's defence indus-

14 Shehu, R. (29 February 2024). *Zelenskyy seeks arms co-production and support at Balkan summit*. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/en/zelenskyy-calls-for-continued-support-and-arms-co-production-with-balkan-countries/a-68403471>

15 *ibid.*

16 Karčić, H. (24 January 2026). *Bosnia's quiet rearmament: how a small defence industry is becoming Europe's hidden supplier*. Fair Observer. <https://www.fairobserver.com/business/bosnias-quiet-rearmament-how-a-small-defense-industry-is-becoming-europes-hidden-supplier/>

17 George, M., Djokic, K., Hussain, Z., Wezeman, P. D., & Wezeman, S. T. (March 2025). *Trends in international arms transfers, 2024* (SIPRI Fact Sheet No. 2503). Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/fs_2503_at_2024_0.pdf

18 *Serbia buys advanced artillery and drones from Israeli company Elbit Systems*. Haaretz. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/security-aviation/2025-01-01/ty-article/.premium/serbia-buys-advanced-artillery-and-drones-from-israels-elbit-systems/00000194-1ebe-dbdd-add5-1ebf13af0000>

19 Dassault Aviation. (29 August 2024). *Serbia acquires 12 Rafale fighter jets*. Dassault Aviation. <https://www.dassault-aviation.com/en/group/press/press-kits/serbia-acquires-12-rafale-fighters/>

20 Sarajevo Times. (6 March 2025). *Bosnia and Herzegovina's military industry thrives on growing demand*. <https://sarajevotimes.com/bosnia-and-herzegovinas-military-industry-thrives-amid-growing-demand/>

21 Kurtic, A., & Buyuk, H. F. (25 September 2024). *Bayraktars at half price: Bosnia buys Turkish drones and plans to produce them itself*. Balkan Insight. <https://balkaninsight.com/2024/09/25/half-price-bayraktars-bosnia-buys-turkish-drones-eyes-own-production/>

22 Manuel, R. (21 May 2025). *US authorises military sale of AW119Kx helicopters to Bosnia and Herzegovina*. The Defence Post. <https://thedefensepost.com/2025/05/21/bosnia-herzegovina-aw119kx-us/>

23 Adamowski, J. (19 April 2024). *Albania courts NATO investors to revive Soviet-era munitions factories*. Defence News. https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2024/04/19/albania-courts-nato-investors-to-revive-soviet-era-munitions-plants/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

24 Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Albania. (14 November 2025). *Albania and Italy expand the scope of their strategic cooperation in the field of defence*. <https://www.mod.gov.al/eng/newsroom/1986-albania-and-italy-expand-the-framework-of-strategic-cooperation-in-the-field-of-defence>

25 Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Albania. (25 March 2025). *Albania and the United Kingdom sign agreement to strengthen defence cooperation*. <https://www.mod.gov.al/eng/newsroom/1899-albania-and-the-united-kingdom-sign-agreement-to-strengthen-defence-cooperation>

26 Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Albania. (23 July 2025). *Albania and Turkey sign a protocol on defence cooperation*. <https://www.mod.gov.al/eng/newsroom/1935-albania-and-turkey-sign-defence-cooperation-protocol>

trial base focuses primarily on military land vehicles and tactical communications. The defence cooperation agreement concluded in 2024²⁷ with France represents an important step towards strengthening the country's naval capabilities. Kership, a joint venture between Piriou and Naval Group, has begun construction²⁸ of two offshore patrol vessels that will strengthen Montenegro's ability to monitor its Adriatic waters. Finally, Kosovo is seeking to develop its defence industry from virtually scratch. It has begun procuring drones from Turkey²⁹ and plans to host drone design and ammunition production facilities³⁰. The United States remains a key partner in helping to transform the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) into a fully operational defence force. In 2025, the government announced that it would purchase Black Hawk helicopters from the United States, which will become Kosovo's first military helicopters³¹. The President of Kosovo has also expressed interest in a deeper strategic partnership with the United Kingdom³². Moreover, in this new security context, in 2025 Albania, Croatia, and Kosovo signed a declaration on military cooperation on 18 March 2025 to work jointly towards stronger integration of their defence strategies and systems³³.

This landscape reveals that **security and defence cooperation in the Balkans mainly takes place through bilateral partnerships**

with EU Member States, the United Kingdom and the United States, but also with other partners, such as Turkey, China, Russia and Israel. It also reveals **the existence of a well-established industry for the production of ammunition and opportunities for investment in the design and production of drones**. Given the EU's objectives under its Readiness2030 plan³⁴, including the need to increase the production of explosives, propellants and ammunition and to remove obstacles to military mobility in Europe, **the EU clearly has an interest in positioning itself as the main and most credible security partner in the region**. This is proving more difficult in the case of Serbia, where its partnership with Russia – although largely frozen since 2022 – combined with a strategic partnership with China³⁵, is causing concern and limiting the prospects for a deeper defence partnership at this stage.

Nevertheless, the EU-27 clearly has room for manoeuvre to extend participation in these defence initiatives – including access to relevant financial instruments – to other Western Balkan partners. **This would help to limit the influence of external actors**, support the modernisation of production facilities and reduce strategic asymmetries within the region. Access to EU defence instruments could, for example, enable manufacturers based in Bosnia and Herzegovina to modernise their facilities and increase their

- 27 Senate. (16 July 2025). *Bill No. 857 (2024-2025) authorising the approval of the agreement between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of Montenegro on cooperation in the field of defence* [PDF]. Senate. <https://www.senat.fr/leg/pjl24-857.pdf#annexe>
- 28 Conway, M. (16 September 2025). *A defence duo in the making for Montenegro*. Royal Institution of Naval Architects. <https://www.rina.org.uk/Defence-duo-under-construction-for-Montenegro.html>
- 29 TRT World. (8 October 2025). *Turkish Skydagger drones arrive early in Kosovo: Prime Minist*. <https://www.trtworld.com/article/7e55e94efe54>
- 30 Bytysi, F., & Pothitos, A. (27 November 2024). *Kosovo to build munitions factory and drone lab to support defence industry*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/kosovo-build-ammunition-factory-drone-lab-support-defence-industry-2024-11-27/>
- 31 Zona Militar Editorial Team. (7 December 2025). *The United States will sell UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to equip Kosovo's security forces*. Zona Militar. <https://www.zona-militar.com/en/2025/12/07/us-to-move-forward-with-the-sale-of-uh-60-black-hawk-helicopters-to-equip-kosovos-security-forces/>
- 32 Newsmax Balkans. (9 January 2026). *Vjosa Osmani meets with British ambassador to Kosovo, regional institutions at centre of discussions*. Newsmax Balkans. <https://newsmaxbalkans.al/rajon/kosove/30591/vjosa-osmani-ta-kohe-me-ambasadorin-britanik-ne-kosove-institucionet-e-reja-ne-fokus/news>
- 33 Koha.net. (2025). *Kosovo, Albania, and Croatia sign today the declaration on a military alliance*. <https://www.koha.net/en/index.php/arberi/kosova-shqiperia-e-kroacia-sot-nenshkruajne-deklaraten-per-aleance-ushtarake>
- 34 European Commission. (2024). *White Paper on European Defence – Ready for 2030*. Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space. https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/white-paper-european-defence-readiness-2030_en
- 35 Jankovic, J., & Cvetkovic, L. (7 January 2026). *Serbia strengthens military ties with China through drones and air defence systems*. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. <https://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-china-military-cooperation-drones-air-defense-security/33626646.html>

production of ammunition and artillery. In addition, drones and anti-drone systems can be produced at lower cost in Albania and Kosovo, particularly for surveillance and reconnaissance systems.

With Montenegro and Albania, two candidates progressing rapidly towards EU membership, **the Union should now extend participation in Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in order to strengthen cooperation on military mobility and infrastructure resilience. At the same time, the EU should adapt its investment strategy within the framework of its pre-accession financial assistance to support dual-use infrastructure**, in line with its broader defence preparedness objectives in South-East Europe.

III • Steps in the right direction, but much remains to be done

Over the past two years, the EU has taken concrete steps to strengthen security and defence cooperation in the Western Balkans. It has extended its financial support to the Western Balkans, in particular to Albania³⁶, Bosnia and Herzegovina³⁷, North Macedonia³⁸ and Montenegro³⁹ through the European Peace Facility, thereby helping to strengthen the defence capabilities of the armed forces and provide military equipment.

The EU has also signed defence and security partnerships⁴⁰ with Albania and North Macedonia to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in combating hybrid and cyber threats, support the interoperability of armed forces and provide for greater participation in Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions. Although it is more difficult politically and legally to conclude such partnerships with Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, **the EU should nevertheless strive to overcome these obstacles and conclude similar partnerships with these countries**, as well as with Montenegro. The recent EU-Montenegro Security Dialogue⁴¹ is a step in the right direction towards achieving this goal.

Furthermore, in order to strengthen regional capabilities to combat cyber and hybrid threats, the Western Balkans Cyber Capabilities Centre (WB3C) was established in Podgorica in cooperation with France and Slovenia⁴². It aims to strengthen cyber resilience through training, education and operational support in areas such as cybersecurity, cybercrime and cyber diplomacy. Although this is a highly relevant initiative, **greater financial and technical support is needed to expand its mandate** and position it as a key regional resource for combating hybrid and cyber threats. Broader participation by other EU Member States could further strengthen its capabilities, particularly in the areas of training and information sharing.

36 Goranov, E. (29 July 2025). *EU Council adopts second bilateral assistance measure for Albanian armed forces under European Peace Facility*. Western Balkans. <https://thewesternbalkans.com/the-council-of-the-eu-adopts-the-second-bilateral-assistance-measure-in-support-of-the-albanian-armed-forces-in-the-framework-of-the-european-peace-facility/>

37 European External Action Service. (6 June 2025). *European Peace Facility in Bosnia and Herzegovina: partners for security*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/bosnia-and-herzegovina/european-peace-facility-bosnia-and-herzegovina-partners-security_en

38 Council of the European Union. (25 April 2025). *European Peace Facility: Council adopts third bilateral assistance measure for the army of the Republic of North Macedonia*. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/04/25/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-the-third-bilateral-assistance-measure-in-support-of-the-army-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia/>

39 Council of the European Union. (28 February 2025). *European Peace Facility: Council adopts first-ever assistance measure for Montenegro's armed forces*. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/02/28/european-peace-facility-council-adopts-first-ever-assistance-measure-in-support-of-the-armed-forces-of-montenegro/>

40 Lazarou, E., & Lamprou, P. P. (2025). *The EU's new bilateral partnerships in security and defence* (EPRS Briefing Note No 767.215). European Parliament Research Service. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/767215/EPRS_BRI%282025%29767215_EN.pdf

41 Government of Montenegro. (18 September 2025). *First EU-Montenegro dialogue on security and defence: strengthening cooperation and strategic partnership*. <https://www.gov.me/en/article/first-eu-montenegro-security-and-defence-dialogue-held-strengthening-cooperation-and-strategic-partnership>

42 Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Centre. <https://wb3c.org/>

At the same time, the EU should go beyond operational cooperation with its Western Balkan partners and work towards their gradual integration into its security ecosystem, including in relevant agencies such as ENISA⁴³.

In the field of defence, cooperation with candidate countries remains limited. Current partnerships focus mainly on consultations regarding possible participation in CSDP projects and modest cooperation with the European Defence Agency. However, there is clear potential to go further, particularly in areas such as arms production, space and cyber defence, critical infrastructure resilience, supply chain security and military mobility. Recent EU initiatives⁴⁴ to strengthen defence industrial capabilities and joint procurement between Member States and with Ukraine, reflect precisely the strategic logic that should also apply to the Western Balkan partners. **If the accession framework is to respond to the current security environment, cooperation with candidate countries must increasingly serve the broader objective of European security,** in particular through the gradual extension of access to joint procurement and relevant EU defence initiatives.

In the current security context, the accession process should also aim at the participation of Western Balkan countries in EU defence cooperation frameworks, with the specific case of Serbia to be examined. The EU's focus on the rule of law and public procu-

rement reform in the region is necessary to facilitate joint procurement. At the same time, EU pre-accession financial assistance should also include funds for investment in dual-use infrastructure and defence technologies. Furthermore, the EU's connectivity programme in the region should go beyond economic development and energy security objectives and serve Europe's defence agenda, in particular through **the construction and renovation of roads, ports, bridges and railways that can support military transit.**

Stabilising the Western Balkans today requires moving beyond the restrictive approach devised thirty years ago and a process of European integration shaped for a different era. European initiatives to strengthen security and defence cooperation with regional partners can be more ambitious in the field of defence and extended to all partners in the region that are fully aligned with the CFSP. The gradual integration approach currently being implemented should provide for the extension of Western Balkan partners' participation in EU defence programmes. In short, **enlargement policy and its financial instruments need to be recalibrated to reflect the new security context** and contribute more directly to European security and resilience. If enlargement is described as a "geopolitical imperative", European security and defence policy must reflect this.

⁴³ Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS). (2 October 2024). *Integration of the six Western Balkan countries (WB6) into the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity*. Open Society Foundations – Western Balkans. <https://osfwb.org/publication/integration-of-the-six-countries-of-the-western-balkans-wb6-in-the-european-union-agency-for-cybersecurity/>

⁴⁴ European External Action Service. (8 December 2025). *European Defence Industry Programme: Council gives final approval*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/european-defence-industry-programme-council-gives-final-approval_en

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